

A thin skin is as
great a handicap as
a thick head.

Herbert Kaufman's Weekly Page

You can never find
pure metal or mettle
until you eliminate
baseness

What Has Become of You?

By HERBERT KAUFMAN

What ever *did* become of you? We've searched through the Bankers' Year Book, Moody's Manual, The Congressional Directory, Dun and Bradstreet, The Medical Guide, and "Who's Who," but *your* name isn't listed.

Perhaps, after all, you *changed* your mind and went in for a partnership. What's your concern?

Maybe you're a distinguished *efficiency expert* or a great *engineer*. Some of the powers *back* of the *throne* aren't generally known, but you should at least inform your friends what you've accomplished. Don't be so *modest*.

Oh! no, we're *NOT* mistaken. You're the chap who could do *anything* if you *really* set your *mind* to it. You didn't bother about the *future*. When you were *ready* you'd look about and seize one of the opportunities which the *average* man is always *overlooking*.

Things came so easy for you, that we're *certain* of your *success*. The rest of us had to *plug* and *pole* to make good but you were *different*.

Remember how you *bluffed* through the *lectures* and *crammed up* for examinations at the *last minute*?

It's *wonderful* to have a *ready* brain. *Rapid* thinkers command their *own* terms *these* days.

YOU FAILED?—nonsense! It doesn't seem *possible*. How *did* it happen? You say that the world doesn't appreciate true talent; that there's *no chance* for a man *without* a *pull*?

That's *enough*; the *puzzle* is *solved*; you've given the answer. It's clear now. You *didn't* try. You *never delivered*. You placed too much reliance on your *natural* strength and wouldn't *train* for the *fight*.

You *cheated* yourself of the chance to *organize* your abilities and the world won't let you *disorganize* its systems.

Conceit *flattered* you and exaggerated the *value* of mere *intelligence*. You got into the *habit* of learning just *enough* to *brass by* and it *stuck*: now they've *called* you and you're *not there*.

If you were a painstaking and persevering *worker*, you'd *still* have a chance.

But you're an *unruly thoroughbred*—about the most *useless* animal on earth—all *speed* and *no control*; undependable in *emergencies* that demand a *consistent* brilliant performance, and *too erratic* for steady *hauling* jobs.

Your *portrait* is a *moving picture*—you don't *stand*.

Patience isn't in your *make-up*. You *found* the *opportunities* you talked about—you *could* have done *all* that you *predicted*, if you had put *will* into a few *wishes*.

You sought the *best* in *life* without offering the *best* in *yourself*. Only the *spectacular* phases of affairs appealed to you. You bit at *this* and *that* and *digested nothing*.

Look back! Your record is *strewn* with *half-developed* ideas, intrinsically *sound* propositions, but *all* of them *abandoned* in *mid-course* when the *novelty* of the enterprise wore off.

You're *undisciplined*. You can't handle *others* because you *won't* handle *yourself*.

Go up to *West Point* and watch the cadets prepare for *their* future responsibilities. See them undergo *all* the *duties* which they will later on *direct*.

Obedience is *preparation* for *command*. You wouldn't obey in your *youth* and so you must be *ordered* about now.

You'll spend the rest of your days filling *odd jobs*—a *drifter*; too *headstrong* and *opinionated* to *acknowledge* your *faults*—deluded with *self-esteem*—criticising society for the *recognition* of *delinquencies* to which you *blind* yourself—watching *commonplace* persons gradually mount in influence because they *do* appreciate the importance of *thoroughness*.

Life is hard for *all* who are *too easy* on *themselves*.

The Laborer's Hire

THE man whose first thought is to make his dollar mark in life, seldom has any others. Money is a secondary consideration in big careers. But because deep thinkers can find no interest in projects of limited scope and utility, the benefits they bring to pass frequently result in enormous personal advantage.

No far reaching idea ever sprang from a mere desire for riches. The ambitions of avarice are too low for fortune and distinction.

Pioneer, experimenters and inventors are more or less idealists. A scheme without a dream behind it hasn't much before it.

Imagination is not a cash register—but it conceives them.

Huntington and Hearst visualized farms in the wilderness, groves on the desert and cities upon the prairies. They gave before they got.

Rockefeller's pipe lines reduced the cost of oil for countless millions and so produced a flock for himself.

Edison saw a great light afar and followed it into the very jungle to solve its secret.

Old Astor hurled his confidence four thousand miles and set it to building trading posts along the Oregon.

Anybody who has added to the world's efficiency is welcome to a share of his findings and foundations.

Men who never take the pounds and pence out of their eyes can't see the great profit in service.

Our Bigoted Palates

TOMORROW will eat what today rejects. As man goes hungry he grows tolerant. Necessity is the mother of curiosity too. Every famine has put a few dishes on the world's menu. The palate is a confirmed bigot. It's hard to teach the appetite new tricks, but if we mean to reduce the market bill we'd better broaden its education.

There are just as good fish in the sea as in the seines. The recent introduction of the tilefish to the table is one case in point. Shark steaks are steadily gaining favor. When the cost of living takes a few more jumps we'll quit grinding shiploads of menhaden into fertilizer. We seldom experiment with new edibles until we run out of staples. Tomatoes were once called "love apples" and were considered rank poison. There are millions who would as soon eat a copperhead as a frog-leg but it is quite within the range of probability that our descendants will consider certain varieties of snakes exceedingly delicious. Don't shudder at the thought. Some of your own pet foods are creatures of very doubtful habits. Crabs are chronic scavengers—the preferences of chickens and swine require no elucidation here.

Let's be sensible, and look about a bit.

For instance, there isn't a cleaner, more exquisite tidbit than a fat young muskrat. If you have ever watched one washing the grass roots on which they exclusively subsist the suggestion wouldn't wrinkle your nose. The meadows are lavish with unsuspected salads. There are probably lots of other roots equal to carrots and parsnips if we will but search them out.

Nature's larder is inexhaustible. We've still to explore most of it.

The Man Eaters

SAGES used to wrangle over the number of angels that could stand on the point of a needle. Now they definitely prove how many devils can crowd on the head of a pin.

Fifteen hundred microbes stretched in a line won't reach across a razor edge and there are yet smaller ones than these, only the eyes of existing microscopes are too weak to see them.

Some especially fecund varieties propagate at the rate of sixteen millions per day. Maybe there are mathematicians who can compute the descendants of this little brood at the end of a year.

Roughly speaking, sesquiquintequadrillions of 'em (and then some) are in the midst and middle of everybody. It is impossible to estimate on which particular sector of your anatomy they're lunching at this very instant.

So long as you retain vitality and renew tissue as fast as they consume it, don't worry, but the moment resistance lessens and the police forces of the blood fail to arrest them fast enough, anything is liable to happen.

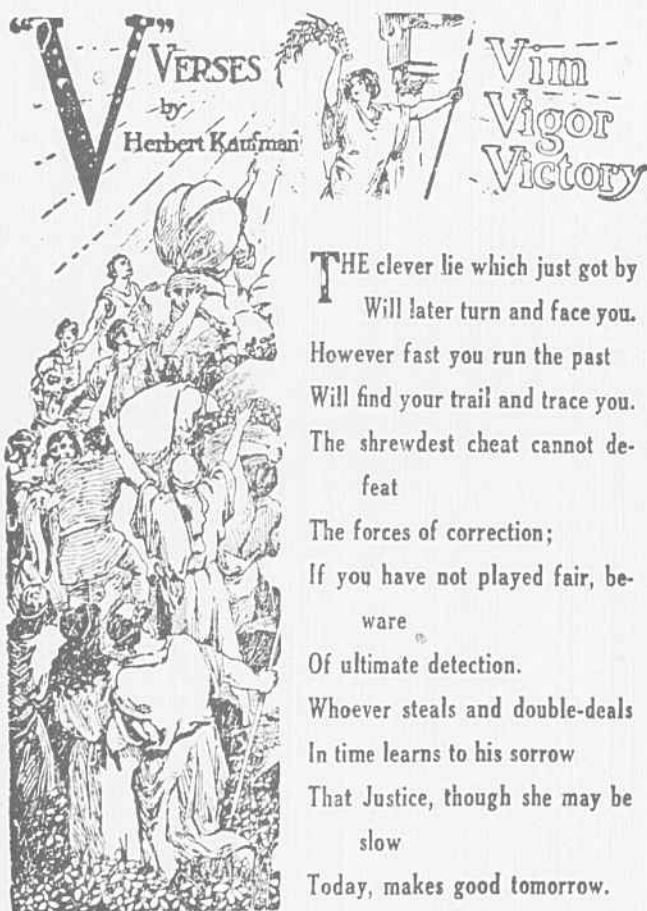
Most diseases that run us down actually eat us up. Tuberculosis is literally consumption—so are malarial fever, typhoid and pernicious anaemia.

Anthropophagous germs have battled with man for the control of the earth since the first dawn. All the clumsy, floundering gawks that waded the primeval ooze didn't kill as many humans as the pneumococcus slays in a decade.

The mylodon, the megatherium and like beasts were such huge targets that a whole tribe could turn loose on one of them and make every blow count where it would do the most good.

St. George didn't put any important dragons out of business. It's far more likely that one of them killed him.

The real demons are in pathology—not mythology.



A Reel True Fairy Tale

I'LL show 'em," mumbled Fate. "It's time to take another fall out of these scoffers. So I don't exist. H'mph! They'll sit up and take notice when I pull off this stunt."

Whereupon, she put on her best bib and tucker, strolled into Broadway, searched through the crowd, caught sight of a little knockabout comedian—a mere line on the program of a slap-stick farce—and (contrary to report, having a decided sense of humor) walked up to Charlie Chaplin, tapped him on the shoulder and said, "You're IT."

Since when, we've all reconferred belief in fairy tales. From \$35 a week to \$680,000 a year! Talk about the "Once-upon-a-timers" of Hans Christian Andersen and Horatio Alger!

But the real fun of it all would be lost if there weren't a nice old lady in a new black silk, sitting on a new gold chair, in a big new house somewhere in London, at this very moment—still shaking her head over the incredulity of life. Who could tell her that fairy godmothers don't happen any more—or you.

You're a very important person, Charlie Chaplin—seriously important to the scheme of things that are. You're fresh oil in the lamp of Faith. You *did* find the pot of diamonds under the rainbow. The streets of America turned to gold as you walked on them.

You're *another* "Impossibility" that *does* exist.

Said the tick to the clock, "Did you ever notice that when I quit the whole works stop?"

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